

## *Romeo and Juliet - Literary Terms and Study Guide*

### *Characters:*

#### The Montagues

Lord Montague

Lady Montague

Romeo

Benvolio

Balthasar

Abraham, *servant (I.1 only)*

#### The Capulets

Lord Capulet

Lady Capulet

Juliet

Tybalt

Nurse

Peter, *Nurse's servant,*

Sampson and Gregory, *servants (I.1 only)*

Prince Escalus, *ruler of Verona*

Mercutio, *relative of the Prince, Romeo's friend*

Friar Laurence, *a Franciscan priest*

Friar John, *told to deliver letter to Romeo*

Count Paris, *engaged to Juliet*

Apothecary, *sells poison*

Time: The fourteenth century

Place: Verona and Mantua, towns in Italy

**Literary Terms** – *come up with one more example of each of these.*

**Paradox:** when two things happen that directly contradict and seem impossible. This is used often in R&J, because the love of Romeo and Juliet contradicts the hatred of the families.

*examples:* Traveling back in time and killing your parents.

“O brawling love! O loving hate! O heavy lightness! Serious vanity!” (I.1.149-150).

**Personification:** when non-human things are given human qualities.

*example:* Shakespeare is not content to say, “The sun is shining.” He would rather say, “the worshiped sun/ Peered forth the golden window of the east” (I.1.91-2).

**Dramatic foil:** when two characters are placed next to each other to heighten the contrast between them.

*examples:* Arnold Schwarzenegger and Danny DeVito were in a movie called *Twins*.

Benvolio is trying to stop the fighting in I.1, while Tybalt is trying to fight more – Benvolio's peaceful nature and Tybalt's desire to fight are highlighted as a result.

**Pun:** a play on words. Shakespeare often has puns as the center of witty conversation.

*example:* The play opens with Sampson and Gregory punning on “colliers/choler/collar” after saying they will “not carry coals,” meaning that they won’t put up with insults. A collier sells coal, choler is anger, and the collar is the hangman’s noose.

**Iambic pentameter:** a poetic form with five beats per line, with the first accent on the second beat.

Shakespeare uses this form throughout his plays, whenever people are speaking in poetry. “Blank verse” is unrhymed iambic pentameter. When you see a character’s lines start midway across the page, it is because they are finishing the iambic pentameter that the previous speaker started.

*example:* Benvolio: Good morrow, Cousin.

Romeo: Is the day so young?

Benvolio: But new struck nine.

Romeo: Aye me, sad hours seem long! (I.1.131-5)

*no additional examples needed*

**Prose vs. poetry:** When characters aren’t speaking in iambic pentameter (see above), they are speaking in prose, or “normal” language. For prose, there is no meter, no rhyme, it’s just normal sentences that go all the way to the margins. This is usually the language of comedy or of lower-class people. Poetry is reserved for nobility or for language of love.

*example:* The entire opening of the play (I.1)

**Soliloquy:** when one person speaks alone, unheard by other characters, usually to express their thoughts or feelings.

*example:* Juliet’s “Balcony scene” speech in II.2 (even though Romeo hears it).

**Monologue:** when one person speaks alone, but is heard by other characters.

*examples:* The Prince’s proclamation at the end of the fight in I.1.

Mercutio’s “Queen Mab” speech in I.4.

**Aside:** when one person speaks so that only selected people or the audience can hear, usually just a short line.

*example:* Sampson and Gregory whisper in I.2 so that the Montagues can’t hear.

**Metaphor:** a comparison showing that one thing *is* something else.

*example:* “Juliet is the sun” (II.2.3).

Simile: a comparison using *like* or *as*.

*example:* Thou art/ As glorious to this night, being o'er my head,/ As is a winged messenger of Heaven. . ." (II.2.26-8).

Allusion: a reference to something else, usually art or literature. Shakespeare makes repeated "classical" allusions, where he will refer to a Greek god or goddess.

*example:* "She'll not be hit/ With Cupid's arrow. She hath Dian's wit" (I.1.180).

**Scene guide** – *take notes on the significant events of each scene.*

### **Act I**

scene 1: Verona. A public place. Enter Sampson and Gregory, of the House of Capulet, with swords and bucklers.

scene 2: A street. Enter Capulet with Paris, a kinsman of the Prince, and Servant.

scene 3: A room in Capulet's house. Enter Lady Capulet and Nurse.

scene 4: A street. Enter Romeo, Mercutio, Benvolio, with five or six other Maskers, and Torchbearers on their way to Capulet's house.

scene 5: A hall in Capulet's house. Musicians waiting. Enter Servingmen, with napkins.

### **Act II**

scene 1: A lane by the wall of Capulet's orchard. Enter Romeo, alone.

scene 2: Capulet's orchard. Enter Romeo.

scene 3: Friar Laurence's cell. Enter Friar Laurence, with a basket.

scene 4: A street. Enter Benvolio and Mercutio.

scene 5: Capulet's orchard. Enter Juliet, waiting impatiently for the Nurse.

scene 6: Friar Laurence's cell. Enter Friar Laurence and Romeo.

### **Act III**

scene 1: A public place. Enter Mercutio, Benvolio, Page, and Servants

scene 2: Capulet's orchard. Enter Juliet.

scene 3: Friar Laurence's cell. Enter Friar Laurence.

scene 4: A room in Capulet's house. Enter Capulet, Paris, and Lady Capulet.

scene 5: Capulet's orchard. Enter Romeo and Juliet, above, at the window.

## Act IV

scene 1: Friar Laurence's cell. Enter Friar Laurence and Paris.

scene 2: Hall in Capulet's house. Enter Capulet, Lady Capulet, Nurse, and two Servingmen.

scene 3: Juliet's chamber. Enter Juliet and Nurse.

scene 4: Hall in Capulet's house. Enter Lady Capulet and Nurse.

scene 5: Juliet's chamber. Curtains drawn around her bed. Enter Nurse.

## Act V

scene 1: Mantua. A street. Enter Romeo.

scene 2: Friar Laurence's cell.

scene 3: A churchyard; in it a monument belonging to the Capulets. Enter Paris and his Page, bearing flowers and a torch.

*O brother Montague, give me thy hand:  
This is my daughter's jointure, for no more  
Can I demand. (V.3.296-8)*



*Use the space below to keep track of two possible essay topics and some quotes you can use to answer them.*

Essay topic # \_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_

Example: (Act \_\_\_. Scene \_\_\_. Lines \_\_\_\_\_) “ \_\_\_\_\_

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